

What will this BABLER say?

N^o 23

I N
TWO SERMONS,

On Acts xvii. and 18.

PREACH'D IN

St. NICHOLAS's Church, *Newcastle,*

BEFORE

The MAYOR, Recorder, Aldermen, Sheriff, and
Common-Council, *November 6.*

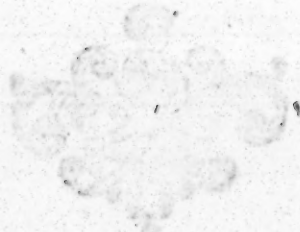
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Vicar of *Stannington*, and Lecturer of *St. Nicolas.*



L O N D O N:

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S E R M O N I.

A C T S xvii. 18.

What will this Babler say?

TH O', to make Choice of such Texts of Scripture for the Subject of a Sermon, as are either uncommon or whimsical, barren or unpractical, may seem somewhat light and ludicrous; may justly denominate a Man formal and singular; and favours but too much of Self-conceit, Vanity, and Affectation, (as disdaining to take up with, or to be confined to the more usual and ordinary Topicks of the Age :) Yet I say, granting all this, and whatever else may be either justly or invidiously suggested by Persons of a more refin'd Taste, if I can't, notwithstanding, from the Words which I've now read, form a just, regular, and rational Discourse, then shall I freely permit all such as set up for Criticks, and pretend to a superior Reach of Thought and Judgment to the rest of Mankind, to make what Remarks, what Reflections and Observations they please upon the Preacher: Nay, if that won't do, I am very willing (with all due Submission be it spoken) to share with St Paul

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in the Honour of being called and reputed a *Babler*.

And now, what I have to offer upon this so uncommon (but not therefore less copious) an Argument, is only to shew in what Cases, for what Reasons, and upon what Accounts, a Man who pretends either to inform or instruct others, may justly be esteem'd a *Babler*: Which Rules, or Directions, whoever observes, I do take upon me to assert, will never fall under the odious and detestible Character, or (to give it a softer Term) the harsh and disagreeable Imputation of a *Babler*, so falsely and unjustly applied to St *Paul* in the Text. These then (such as they are) I shall reduce to the ten following Heads, or Particulars; to which (as I shall seldom appear here again) I beg the Favour of your more serious and needful Attention, while I deliver and express myself in such a Manner as not to incur the Censure of a *Babler*, which this Discourse is design'd to expose and condemn.

He therefore that would not be thought a *Babler*, (I mean properly and deservedly so called, in Contradistinction to such a *Babler* as St *Paul* was) let him take Care, in the

1st Place, That he pretend not to assert or affirm any Thing which he is not duly qualified to prove and demonstrate.

For sure it must render you gradually the more impatient, uneasy, and unattentive to a Man's Discourse, to hear him gravely and formally

mally assert this, or that, or t'other; and while you are still waiting and list'ning, and expecting when at last he should assign some Reason why the Thing is so and so, instead thereof he shall only leave you more and more in the Dark; and so, by one continued nauseous Strain of indigested Matter, shall only further mislead your Judgment, bewilder your Fancy, and confound your Reason.

For as nothing can be so plain and obvious to common Sense, but what may be capable of being further explain'd and laid open; so there is hardly any thing which a Man can either speak or write of, but what a moderate Genius may not a little support and confirm, either by Force, or Colour, or Fallacy of Argument: For as 'tis this which alone can add any Ornament, any Weight, any Energy to our Words; so this alone can yield any Pleasure or Entertainment, or bring any Profit or Improvement to the Hearer. 'Tis this which renders our Discourse both useful and agreeable; which makes it not only to be understood, but remember'd too: Nay, 'tis this alone which can make an Impression upon the Spirits, or keep up the Attention of those we address ourselves to. In short, 'tis the Manner of handling a Subject which must recommend, approve, and set it off; which must strike upon, and bring it home to the Senses; which must touch, or move, or affect the Understanding: in one word, which must

make the Thing plausible, or give it an Air of Probability.

But then, as the Manner of some is, (to use the Words of St *Paul*, our *Babler* in the Text) to hear a Man with a clouded Aspect and haughty Air, to assert a Thing is so, because it is so, betrays no small want of Thought, Height of Assurance, Barrenness of Invention, Shallowness of Reason, and Weakness of Judgment. Whereas, on the contrary, the same Story, whether told or composed by another Person, receives such Advantages, displays such Embellishments, causes such Emotions, enkindles such Desires and Workings in its Favour, as give it a different Turn, produce a quite different Effect, and make it appear in a quite different Light. Thus 'tis very remarkable of the wise Widow of *Tekoah*, that she represented the Case of *Absolom* to King *David*, in such a moving Strain of Eloquence, with such a great Strength, such an Efficacy and Prevalence of Argument, as not only mercifully inclined him to grant her piteous Request, but withal sensibly enabled him to smother the Drift and Design of her artful Contrivance: *Is not*, says the King, *the Hand of Joab with thee in all this?* Thus, we see, if a Man would avoid being a *Babler*, he must imitate *Hudibras's* Hero; of whom 'tis said, that

“ *For every Why he had a Wherefore:*” But

2^{dly}, Whoever would avoid the Imputation of
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of a *Babler*, must keep close to the Subject or Argument which he undertakes to handle.

For (as my first Rule shew'd the Expediency of proving what we affirm; so this second I therefore lay down, because) Religion is oftentimes supported and upheld by Reason; and all Men that are intelligent, acknowledge the Necessity of it for that Purpose: For sure we can't but know, how frequently the right Side of the Question is defeated; in other Words, how often Truth is run down, and a good Cause lost, for want of proper and able Advocates to maintain and defend them. 'Tis no less certain, that some Errors (whether they regard Speculation or Practice) are much more plausible than Truths; which is the Reason why so many are tempted to embrace and retain them. Now to what do we think can all this be owing, but to that Volubility of Tongue, that Fluency of Expression, that Clearness and Accuracy of Stile and Language, which some Men are great Masters of, in espousing and maintaining their several Opinions; but especially when 'tis their Business to palliate, to varnish and gloss a false Doctrine or mistaken Notion?

If then so much Success may attend the Vindication of a bad Cause, no wonder if we oftentimes meet with some Difficulty in defending, and are in some Danger of being baffled and banter'd out of a good one; to avoid which, no less Art and Skill is required in clearly uttering our own Notions, Conceptions, and Ideas
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of Things, than in answering the Objections, and taking off the evasive and sophistical Arguments of others. Thus our blessed Saviour, (tho' he had the Misfortune of being thought what is worse than a *Babler*, viz. a Deceiver; yet) with what a particular Clearness and Quickness did he correct those false Comments, and take off those artificial Glosses, which the Pharisees and other *Jewish* Doctors had so far put upon the Law of *Moses*, as even to pervert its true Sense and Meaning, and frustrate its proper End and Design?

And therefore, when a Man uses solid Reasoning and Arguing, which at once comes home to the Conscience, and strikes upon the Affections; when he has either the Advantage of natural Parts, or acquired Learning, (or as the Apostles formerly had, of divine Inspiration) to exert in Defence of those Principles or Opinions, which he professes to hold; when he avoids all needless Deviations or Digressions from his Subject, which tend only to perplex and puzzle the Cause he would seem to espouse; in short, when he keeps close to what he affirms, and lays down as the sole Ground-work, or Foundation of what he designs to build upon it; then, and then only, is his Discourse rational, clear, and convictive. Then is he "ready
" always to give an Answer to every Man that
" asketh him a Reason of the Hope that is in
" him;" and withal qualified to inform the Ignorant, to reclaim the Wicked, to convince the Ob-

Obstinate, and convert the Erroneous. Thus so pathetical, so cogent, so conclusive, was the Dispute or Conference which St *Stephen* had with the *Jews*, that ('tis said) they were not able to "resist the Wisdom and the Spirit by" which he spake". Thus again, so strong, so goodly, so persuasive, was St *Paul's* Preaching at *Antioch*, (this same *Babler* in the Text) when he so closely argued for Christianity against Judaism and Gentilism, that "they besought, that the same Words might be preached to them the next *Sabbath*;" as you may see in the 13th Chapter of the *Acts*.—And this naturally suggests another Rule, very fit to be observed by every Person who would not be called a *Babler*; and that is,

3dly, He must avoid every thing that is light, or trifling, or foreign to his Purpose.

For as we ought not to content ourselves with seeming Arguments, which have no real and sound Bottom; so must we not have Recourse to flat, meagre, jejune Notions, nor make Use of foreign Proofs, and far-fetch'd Reasons, which carry neither Force nor Weight in them. For 'tis only a mispending, misusing, misapplying of Time; a meer blotting, blurring, and filling up of Paper; a perfect puzzling, confounding, amusing our Hearers; when, to Persons more knowing and wiser than ourselves, we vainly pretend to offer, assert, or dictate any Sentence or Proposition; which, instead of having a faint
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Glimmering or Appearance of Reason or Argument, does only tend and serve to no Manner of Purpose. Such Persons can never aspire to the honourable Character of Scholars, or Philosophers, or Arguers; but must dwindle to the more groveling Appellation of *Bablers*, *Scio-lists*, and impertinent Triflers.

Thus *Solomon*, the wisest of Men, and whose Writings therefore must be allow'd to be the farthest remov'd from the Name of a *Babler*, very elegantly compares this same Person to a Serpent; as we find, *Eccles. x. 11. Surely the Serpent will bite without Enchantment; and a Babler is no better.* As if he had said, as 'tis natural for this Animal to bite and sting, and nibble at the Heels of such Persons as fall in the Way of its venomous Tongue; so that which drops from a *Babler's* impure Mouth, (whose Words not unfitly resemble the Sound and Noise of a Serpent's hissing) is no less naturally biting and stinging, nauseous and offending, to the Ears of those who happen to be stunn'd and grated, with his dry, frothy, and insipid Discourse.

Thus again, (to give only one Instance more) How often has a plausible *Babler*, (*alias* a would-be Orator) so long employ'd and exercis'd, nay rather appall'd and mortified the Ears of an Audience, in Hopes that he would, at last, bring forth something that was either useful or entertaining; till, of a sudden, the little Light he gave you, has expir'd (as it were)

were) with a Snuff; and the Man has concluded, as he began, in the same continued Strain of a ridiculous, empty, noisy, insignificant Sound of Words; not much unlike that of the teeming Mountain, (so famous in Story) which, after a long Travail, and Labour, and Throwing, was, at length, deliver'd of a poor, little, sorry Mouſe?—But, to be more ſerious, whoever would avoid *St Paul's* Fate in the Text, let him endeavour,

4thly, To expreſs his Thoughts in clear, plain, and intelligible Terms.

For, as there is ſcarce any one ſo happy as to ſpeak well without ſome Art or Care; (and therefore, ſure we are to make Uſe of theſe to embellish our Stile) ſo the more plain, eaſy, and familiar our Words are, the more intelligible, as well as the more entertaining, is our Diſcourſe: But then, here will lie the main Difficulty, that we beware of theſe two equally dangerous Extremes, *viz.* that we aſpire not after flaunting Bombaſt, or fuſtian Language, that certain Sign of a Pedant; nor, on the other hand, deſcend to a flat, lean, languid, lifeleſs Way of expreſſing ourſelves: For the former is no leſs ſhocking and grating to a nice Ear, than the latter is moſt ridiculous and diſtaſteful to common Senſe.

And therefore, by plain, eaſy Language, I mean, proper, apt, ſignificant, well choſen Words, which fully expreſs the Senſe and Meaning

ing of what we would say, and at the same Time are levell'd and adapted to the lowest Capacity: But notwithstanding all this, still Reason and Argument are to be made Use of, and the more of these, the better: For Mankind are naturally desirous of Truth and Information; and, (where they are neither obstinate, nor blotted with a full Opinion of themselves, they) are are always diffident and distrustful of their being in the right. Now this they can't otherwise come to the Knowledge of, but either by hearing or consulting such Persons as have acquired some Character and Reputation for Learning; and how great a Share soever they may have of this, 'tis all lost and useless to us, if we can't apprehend what they would seem to explain and unfold, nor receive any Benefit, or Improvement, or Edification, by their Discourse.

Thus St Paul, (the *Babler* so called, but greatest Master of Oratory of his Time, and) who, in an eminent Manner, had the *Gift of Knowledge, of Prophecy, and divers kinds of Tongues*; yet even this same Person particularly declares of himself, that *in the Church he had rather speak five Words with his Understanding, than by his Voice he might teach others also, than Ten Thousand Words in an unknown Tongue*. Thus again, the Greek Fathers Sermons are, to this Day, called *Homilies*; because they were familiar and plain, and spoke in such a
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Stile and Manner as are used in common and ordinary Conversation.

But, to return to the Argument: Vulgar Phrases and common Idioms of Speech, are oftentimes the most proper and significant; nay, a mean, bald, blunt Expression, is sometimes very becoming; a familiar Word or Saying very useful and seasonable. Hence such Authors, and even Speakers, as are the easiest to be understood, are the hardest to imitate; there being such a Fitness, such a Propriety, and (as it were) Attitude of Words and Expressions, to be made Use of, in the Manage of an Argument, as even the greatest Pretenders to human Learning can never attain to.

Thus 'tis very observable of that best of Sermons the World ever saw, or heard, or read, (I mean our blessed Saviour's on the Mount) that there is not one Word in it but what is easy, and plain, and obvious to the meanest Capacity. In like Manner, on all other Occasions, his Words were plain and natural, his Similies common and ordinary, his Parables clear and familiar.

Thus also, (Pardon the Lightness of the Argument) perhaps more moral Doctrines, more useful Subjects, more instructive Lessons, may be drawn from *Aesop's Fables* of Cocks and Bulls, &c. than from any other Book that ever yet appeared in the World, excepting only that of the Holy Scriptures.

Thus *lastly*, To give only one Instance more,

and that a very remarkable one. The celebrated Archbishop *Tillotson's* Works, as sure they are worthy of the highest Encomiums, for that close Reasoning, that strong Proof, that manly Eloquence, which runs thro' each single Performance; so are they, perhaps, in nothing more inimitable, than in the natural Easiness, Plainness, and Simplicity of the Stile. The same may also be said of our most excellent Book of *Common Prayer*, and of that most universally approv'd Book, intitled, *The whole Duty of Man*.—But not to be so very tedious, he that would not fall under the Character of a *Babler*, must also take Care,

5thly, To avoid all nauseous, needless, and impertinent Repetitions.

For he that does not (in the Prosecution of a Subject) continually offer something new and untouch'd upon before, does not strictly observe, pursue, and adhere to the Thread of his Discourse, and does not judiciously make his Arguments hang (as'twere) upon a Link or Chain, so as mutually to strengthen and support each other; but, instead thereof, either goes backward and forward, or repeats the same Things over and over again. Such a Person (I humbly conceive) is a downright *Babler*, in the literal and proper Acceptation of the Word: For, instead of taking upon him to inform and instruct others, (a Province he is by no means fitted for) he should rather first learn to think

think justly, to argue closely, and to write rationally and conclusively : For certain it is, the Person that can neither speak nor write in Mood and Figure himself, may yet have so much Sense and Sagacity, as to form a Judgment, and make a Discovery, whether any thing like these appears in those who pretend to advise and direct him. Thus those Officers, who were sent to apprehend our blessed Saviour, return'd with this Answer in their Mouths, for not executing the Commands laid upon them, *Never Man spake like this Man.*

Once more : As there is nothing we can suppose or imagine in human Life, but what is capable of being maintain'd and defended by more Arguments than one ; so the want of these debases a Man to the Level of Brutes, which naturally tread in the same Rounds, observe the same Tract, and pursue the same Pace, as being Things which they have long been enur'd and accustom'd to. 'Tis true, indeed, Repetitions, on some particular Occasions, may be both beautiful and emphatical ; but where they are really needless and unnecessary, they give Men but too great a Handle to call both our Invention and Judgment into question. Thus your Sophisters and Wranglers in Philosophy, if the Argument they urge can't gain the Point they are obliged to maintain, will immediately have Recourse to those of a different kind ; which, tho' perhaps not really stronger in themselves, yet, by that different Way of Management,

ment, which different Topicks will always afford, will therefore seem to carry in them a greater Force or Appearance of Reason. Thus likewise the *Babler St Paul*, (whose elaborate and florid Discourses give us so often an Occasion to mention him) tried the same Course with good Success, and to the great Astonishment and Confusion of those that heard him. For we are told, that as he reason'd (not long upon the same Subject; nor of the same Things often repeated; but, as he reason'd) of *Righteousness; Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.*

But the Theme I have chosen is so very copious, that I must leave the five remaining Rules to be the Subject of another Discourse.

In the Management whereof, as I pretend not to inform any Man's Judgment, propose not to tickle any Man's Ears, aim not at popular Applause, and have not any other sinister Views or Designs; so, by duly observing the Rules above named, and hereafter to be laid down, I hope to be able to dress it up in such a Manner, as that the same may carry in it something (at least, or, as it were) of good Doctrine, plausible Reason, just Method, and tolerable Language.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S E R-

S E R M O N II.

A C T S xvii. 18.

What will this Babler say?

ST *Paul*, being persecuted at *Thessalonica*, for preaching the Gospel of Christ, removes privately from thence to *Berea*; where, meeting with a more friendly Reception from the Inhabitants, but like Persecution from the same *Jews*, who followed him thither also, he comes to *Athens*, that once famous and polite University. But as those Persons who are most knowing, are not always the most religious; so, we are told, St *Paul* observ'd this same *City* to be wholly given to Idolatry. In short, the Success of his Ministry was here such as to convince and convert a very small Number of Men; while the much greater Part of them scoffed and derided him, giving him no other Name than that of a *Babler*.

In my last Discourse upon this Subject, I attempted to shew how, or by what Means, a Man might avoid this Imputation of a *Babler*; tho' it prov'd to be the Case of St *Paul* here in the Text, viz. by observing the ten following Rules or Directions: As,

1st, That

1st, That he pretend not to assert or affirm any thing, which he is not duly qualified to prove and demonstrate.

2^{dly}, That he keep close to the Subject or Argument which he undertakes to handle.

3^{dly}, That he avoid every thing which is light, or trifling, or foreign to his Purpose.

4^{thly}, That he express his Thoughts in the most clear, plain, and intelligible Terms.

5^{thly}, That he use not any nauseous, needless, or impertinent Repetitions.

So far I have already proceeded. I come now to those that still remain. Whoever therefore would endeavour to be like *St Paul* in what he really was, and unlike him in what he was only reputed to be, either by an ignorant or prejudic'd Set of Men, then let him take Care

6^{thly}, That he put no more Matter into his Proposition than he is able to make out, lest thereby he seem to run away from that which he ought to keep to.

For, tho' this indeed may seem not to differ very much from what we laid down, as the first and second Rule of our last Discourse; yet we design to treat of it after a new and different Manner; by which means, we hope, we shall
not

not offend against the last Rule then mention'd, viz. that of avoiding all vain, silly, babbling Repetitions. Now, in handling of Things common and generally received, we are to make Use of Reason and Demonstration; but intricate and abstruse Matters we are (if possible) to bring down to the Size and Level of Mens Capacities. Now this, I conceive, can't otherwise be effected, than by keeping close to the Explanation of that Subject, or Assertion, or Proposition, we happen to be engaged in; without making any wild Excursions, or using any subtle Evasions, or intermixing any needless Expletives; or, in short, without incoherently rambling from one thing to another: which is ever look'd upon to be a certain Sign and Characteristick of a disorder'd Head, and disturb'd Imagination, rather than of a sound Mind, and intelligent Being. Thus, when our *Babler*, St *Paul*, made his Defence before *Festus*, we find he express'd himself to so much Advantage, with such Force of Reason, and Power of Eloquence, that the *Roman* Governor, instead of calling him a *Babler*, (as the *Jews* did in the Text) was rather pleas'd (tho' perhaps no less against his own Judgment) to pronounce him a Madman.

And here, by the bye, I must observe, (tho' they may, as we have seen, be applied to one and the same Person; yet) there is a wide Difference, an immense Distance, a vast Disproportion, betwixt a *Babler* and a Madman: For the

former is always empty, and ridiculous, and impertinent, like himself; whereas the latter oftentimes utters such flighty Thoughts, such lofty Expressions, such witty Sentences, as even a wise, grave, serious Man, need not be ashamed of.

But to proceed: It is not sufficient that the Things we deliver be true; but we must prove them to be such by strong and convincing Arguments: For we are not to presume, that Men will admit of what we say, whether it be prov'd or not; for, as they are Men, they are rational Beings, and therefore must be dealt with accordingly. And this is certain, that we can come at their Minds only by Reason and Discourse; and if we put them off without these, we undervalue them, nay, even think them below their Species. For our Auditors are not insensible Machines and Clock-work; and therefore they must be wound up only by Reason: particularly in all such Cases wherein we premeditatedly address ourselves to them; as, whether we would refute a growing Error, or establish a known Truth, or recommend any Virtue, or decry any Vice, or shew and maintain the Lawfulness and Necessity of any religious Practice. Thus, with respect to these, and such like great Duties of Religion, our Apostle St Paul (this same reputed Babler and Madman) exhorts Titus, in his Doctrine, *to shew Uncorruptness, Gravity, Sincerity, sound Speech, that can't be condemn'd.* And indeed who so fit,
who

who so proper, who so qualified, to give such Advice to others, as he, who, upon all Occasions, was so well known to follow it himself? But,

7thly, He that would not come under the Denomination of a *Babler*, must be sure to dispose and digest his Thoughts into due Order and Method.

For, without these, a Man so cramps, so clogs and fetters his rational Faculties, that he never knows where to begin, how to go on, nor when to end. Without these, he often loses and bewilders himself, beats so often about the Bush, goes so much out of his Way, and so far wanders from his Subject, that, instead of once coming near it, he leaves (where he found) both himself and us, at as great a Distance from it as when he first started. Without these, he insensibly runs into such an huddled, confus'd, distracted Jumble and Medley of Words, as make his Discourse not a little incoherent and inconsistent with itself. In short, without these, he may, at all Adventures, almost as commendably pitch upon any Text of Scripture, from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, and perhaps as closely apply and adapt it to his Purpose, as upon that individual one which he so wisely selects for the Subject of his Discourse. And if this Way of talking and arguing does not make a Man fall under the Denomination of a *Babler*, justly and strictly, so called, then am I at a

Loss to assign what will. Thus the wise Son of *Sirach* made it his Observation long ago, *A Babler and a Fool will regard no Time*; under which last Word may be implied Order and Method.

For 'tis this, which St *Paul* (the *Athenian Babler*, or rather Oracle, indeed) calls *rightly dividing the Word of Truth*. 'Tis this, indeed, which is (as 'twere) the Heraldry, and emblazoning of a Discourse. For it is the due marshalling and ordering of it, and giving every Part its right and proper Place; and therefore, a methodical Arguer disposes of Things according to the Nature and Quality of them, sets them in their proper Classes and Ranks, and thereby shews his own Judgment, and, at the same Time, edifies his Hearers. I say, he thereby evidences his own Judgment and Skill; for it is the want of these which makes Men talk confusedly, and utter Things not digested and methodiz'd. Whereas, that which we call Method, or a Distribution of our Matter into Particulars, gives the Mind of Man such a Light into what is said, that *Horace* calls it the *Lucidus Ordo* of Speech; and that because it renders a Discourse clear and perspicuous.

Besides this, it is a Sign that a Man is no Stranger to Logick, that he has penetrated into the true Nature and Reason of Things, and sees the Dependance of one upon another, when he proceeds orderly, and makes proper Transitions, and observes a due Connection and Coherence
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of the Matters he treats of: For, this shews that he thoroughly understands the Point he handles, and that he has an exact View of it in all its Parts. Thus a wise and skilful Architect, before he begins to raise or erect a new Edifice, will first form and project, will seriously weigh and delineate in his own Mind the most commodious or useful Scheme, or Model, or Plat-form of his intended Fabrick; and this will give him such Helps and Directions, so well to adjust and effect his Design, as to make every Part appear beautiful, regular, and uniform.

In like manner, all sorts of Writers, who soar above the Level of common Scribblers, never fail, by their Works, to shew us the great Usefulness and Advantage of a methodical Performance. Thus the Royal Philosopher, (I mean *M. Antoninus*) in his Eleventh Book of *Conversation with himself*, has ten Considerations or Helps against Anger, which he reckons up distinctly one after another, as 1st, 2dly, 3dly, and so on to 10thly. And this Division of Discourses into numeral Heads, has justly obtain'd in all Christian Churches to this very Day, especially where Men of Sense and Learning are any way concern'd in them: For, by this Means, an Orator musters his Forces, places them in Rank and File, brings them up in Order of Battle, and thereby does Military Execution with them. Thus, whoever peruses the elegant and masterly Works, the accurate and well-di-

digested Labours of Archbishop *Tillotson*, Bishop *Blackball*, Dr *Scot*, Dr *Stanhope*, Mr *Norris*, Mr *Young*, with many other eminent and learned Divines, will soon perceive the Excellency and Necessity of what I'm now contending for.— And as want of Method does thus, more especially, place a Man in the low Rank and Quality of a *Babler*; so

8thly, Not unlike such are all those to be accounted, who are too long, too tedious, and prolix in their Way of speaking and writing.

For sure no Subject can be so copious and general, so productive and fruitful of Matter, so easy or difficult to be discoursed upon, but still there is (or may be, at least) a brief, concise, sententious Way of handling it; and therefore, to use a Multiplicity of Words, to dwell long upon a Topick, or to spin out our Discourse to a great Length, (which is usually so much Time lost to no manner of Purpose) is never the Way either to recommend ourselves, or improve others. For 'tis an undeniable Maxim, that of the Schools, in all Cases of human Life, *Frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora*, i. e. 'tis needless to use many Words, where a few may as soon, or rather sooner indeed, serve the Turn. Thus perhaps there is more solid Matter contain'd in, and more real Devotion to be raised from one of the shortest Prayers or Collects of our most excellent Liturgy, than can be extracted or excited from any
one

one of the longest (but senseless) Effusions of our modern Enthusiasts. Thus again, (to give a much stronger Instance) 'Tis morally, nay, 'tis more than humanly impossible, for all the Wit, or Art, or Skill, or Invention of the World, to compose or contrive a Prayer, so comprehensive, so general, and yet withal so peculiarly fitted and adapted to all the various Conditions, Circumstances, or Incidents of Life, as that of the *Lord's Prayer*.

In order therefore to avoid Repetition and Loquacity, (which are equally blame-worthy) Things are to be put in as clear a Light, express'd in as plain Words, and brought out in as short Periods, as possibly may be; and therefore the shorter a Discourse is, (if well digested and contriv'd) 'tis generally both better heard, and better remember'd: For, to spin out a Subject, not only trifles away much Time, but flats the Audience, and diverts the Attention: To carry Matters, by a long and laborious Proof, beyond the plain Observation of Mankind, looks rather as if we design'd to display our Rhetorick, and embellish our Stile, than to make Use of solid Reason and convincing Argument.

And therefore, 'tis a peculiar Happiness in either a Speaker or Writer, when he can, in a few Words, lay open his Matter in its full Extent, and avoid all those needless Superfluities and Redundancies of Speech, which come in only to lengthen the Discourse. Thus St *Paul*
(our

(our famous *Babler* in the Text) has, in the 13th Chapter of his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, given us such a short, but excellent Description of Charity, as takes in all that either need or can be said upon that Subject; the Particulars whereof, were they to be enlarg'd upon, would fill a Volume. Thus likewise, perhaps more Sense, more Good, may be gather'd from five or six Lines of *Seneca* and *Salust*, than from a whole Page of some more verbose and voluminous Authors.—And this naturally suggests another Rule or Direction, very necessary to be observ'd by all such as would not be called *Bablers*; and that is,

9thly, That they aspire after a Propriety of Stile, and Elegancy of Expression.

For tho' (as we observed before) the plainest and easiest Words are always the best and most eligible; yet still there is no small Skill and Judgment requir'd, no small Propriety and Elegancy shewn, even in the making a right Use and Choice of such Words. For as natural Parts and acquir'd Learning are certainly very excellent and desirable Qualifications in any Person; so ought they therefore always to be exerted and made Use of as Occasions may offer: But then, 'tis a peculiar Gift and Talent, which few can attain to, when we make such a fit and proper Use of them, as to deliver ourselves to the best Advantage, and in the happiest Manner; I mean, when we make a wise
and

and prudent Choice of such Words as are the most conclusive, and withal most expressive of what we would say; and at the same Time betray no Vanity or Affectation, no Pretension to Wit or Fancy, no Desire or Pursuit of popular Applause. For sure a Man may shew his good Language, his close Arguing, his solid Reason, his penetrating Judgment, and his elegant Stile, and yet at the same Time never once launch out into a forc'd and strain'd, a stiff and cramp Way of uttering his Conceptions.

Thus St *Paul*, (our supposed *Babler* in the Text) who never spake any thing that was trifling or insignificant, nor in the least inclining to Fustian or Bombast, is yet, upon most Occasions, very eminent for the Briskness of his Thoughts, the Elevation of his Expressions, and the Elegancy of his Stile; and particularly his Discourse of the Resurrection, (in the 15th Chapter of his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*) is deliver'd in such an eloquent, florid, lively, excellent, and admirable Strain of Reason and Argument, as no Man since could ever pretend to come up to.

Thus also, in *Balaam's* Parables, in *Deborah's* Song, in *David's* Lamentation over *Saul* and *Jonathan*, in several Passages of *Job*, (particularly the 3d Chapter) in many of *David's* Psalms, *Solomon's* Proverbs, and the Prophets Writings in the Old Testament, in our Saviour's Sermon and Parables, in most of St *Paul's* polemical Discourses, and in several of St *Luke's*

historical Narrations, which we meet with in the New Testament: I say, in each of these several and various Productions, may be observ'd such bright Sallies of Wit, such fine Turns of Reason, such great Beauties of Language, as far exceed whatever yet appear'd in any human Composition.

Thus *lastly*, (to give no more Instances) in *Sternhold* and *Hopkins's* Translation of the Psalms, (how much soever some Men may run them down) some of them for Beauty of Thought and Loftiness of Style, could never yet be equall'd, much less outdone by any of the greatest Masters either of Poetry or Oratory; and such particularly is the 104th Psalm, with many others, not much inferior to it.—
But,

10thly and *lastly*, Whoever would not be accounted a *Babler*, must strictly adhere to this Rule, which is none of the least, tho' last mentioned, *viz.* he must study (as far as possible) to acquire the Art and Knack (as it were) of Elocution.

For there is a true, just, sensible, distinct, becoming Way of Reading, such as requires no small Art, Skill, and Judgment; and therefore very few can be compleat and consummate Masters of. For, to give every Word its due Weight and Emphasis, every Sentence its proper Accent and Cadence, and every Period all that Vigour, Life, and Spirit where-
of

of it is capable, is no vulgar nor ordinary Attainment : Nay, rather indeed, 'tis a Business of so much Difficulty, as many knowing and intelligent Persons can rarely surmount ; of so much Use, as commands a fix'd, steady, and constant Attention ; of so much Moment, as seldom fails to have a wonderful Effect, Influence, and Efficacy upon the Hearers ; and of so much Excellency, as gives a peculiar Grace, Lustre, and Ornament to the Discourse.

On the contrary, an injudicious, lifeless, careless, precipitate, slubber'd, perfunctory, superficial Manner of Reading our Compositions, or of uttering our Conceptions, loses most of that Force, Strength, and Energy, which would otherwise very discernibly appear in both : In short then, a good fervent Elocution does no less recommend a lame and weak Performance, than a dull heavy Utterance flattens and enervates a good one.

Thus, to give a plain and familiar Instance of each kind : Perhaps not one Man in twenty, nay, even of those whose publick Profession requires, and whose chief Business it is to attain (if possible) to an accurate and proper Way of expressing themselves, can read a single Chapter of the Bible, without manifestly murdering the Sense, dropping the Connection, and losing the Beauty of that which they so vainly presume to go thro' with. Thus again, on the other hand, 'twas observed long ago by *Tully*, (one of the best of Speakers) that there is nothing so horrid

and uncouth, so abstruse and difficult, but it may be made to look fair and plausible, by that artificial Gloss, that engaging Turn, which an Orator can put upon it.

Once more : To hear a Person publickly sing, and whine, cant, and drone out his Words, (as if his Design was to lull the Audience asleep) is not only highly disagreeable in itself, but very shocking and grating to the Ear: For such a Person never knows where either the Voice is to be adapted to the Matter, or varied with the Expression; where a greater or smaller Weight is to be laid on every Clause, according to its natural Sense and Meaning; where he ought to be quicker or more vehement, where slower and more sedate; how to observe equally all Pauses and Distances; how to mouthe or pronounce handsomely any Figure or Trope; how to avoid a continued Monotony on the one hand, and immoderate Elevations and Depressions on the other: in short, where to use the same Tone and Accent, or where to rise and fall in the right Place.

For this it is to have the Talent of Pronunciation, or the Art of Elocution. And indeed, none ever enjoy'd this Gift in a greater Measure than the *Babler St Paul*, (as *Monf. le Clerc* also is pleas'd, in effect, to call him, but, as others more rightly, the Orator *St Paul*; than whom, I say, none was more happy in the Gift of Utterance) if we may judge, among other Things, by the wonderful Success his Preaching

ing and Reasoning obtain'd in most Places: For tho' he declares himself to be *rude in Speech*; yet this is only to be imputed to his singular Modesty and Humility; as in some of his Epistles he condescends to call himself *less than the least of all Saints, and the chiefest of Sinners*.

'Tis confess'd indeed, tho' Speaking and Writing be quite different Talents; yet where a Man is very eminent for the latter of these Qualifications, he rarely fails not only to have a good Notion and Idea of, but also to give us some demonstrable Signs, some evident Structures of the former. Thus I may instance in *Tully* and *Quintillian*, the greatest Orators amongst the *Romans*; and in *Demosthenes* and *Æschines*, who bore the same Rank among the *Grecians*.

I have now done with this remarkable Incident of *St. Paul's* Life, while he continued at *Athens*; where (like several other *vain Talkers and Deceivers*, as they are now-adays called) he had the Misfortune to be so rudely scoffed and flouted at, to be so undeservedly mock'd and derided; in one Word, to be so unjustly reproach'd, insulted, and traduced, with a *What will this Babler say?*

Now to God the Father, &c.

F I N I S.



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